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VOLUME XII

SUMMER/AUTUMN ISSUE

OCTOBER 1993

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## The Picnic was Grand But Boy Was It HOT!

There were many new faces at the LaVigna picnic, as well as many familiar relatives and friends. The very hot weather kept some of the regulars home -- we missed them all and hope that next year will bring together all of us. We all enjoyed each other's company -- and there was a lot of company to enjoy. Games were played vigorously in spite of the heat - bocci, volleyball and quoits. Food was plentiful. Everyone seemed to especially enjoy Dean's ice cream. There just didn't seem to be enough, even though more kept coming.

The best of the picnic was all the new babies. And for Clora, the fact that her cousin Nick and most of his family, including his new granddaughter, were there, made all the preparation worthwhile. (But she missed her brother Terry, who was in Italy, immensely.)

If you're reading this article, you are invited to next year's LaVigna picnic - the date will be in the Christmas issue.

## The Blizzard Baby Speaks

Hello!! You may have heard of me through the La Vigna grape vine. I'm the infamous BLIZZARD BABY!! Avery Bilancio, daughter of William and Carolyn Bilancio. William is the son of Terry Bilancio, my grandfather(he's pretty cool). The reason I am called the Blizzard Baby is 'cause I was driven home in the Blizzard of '93. I was born March 11 1993 at the Princeton Medical Center and came flying out at 8:45pm in enough time to see my first Cheers episode. Since then I've met most of my close relatives and am having fun being part of the Bilancio clan. My great aunt Clora has been so nice letting my parents get out once in a while by watching me and letting me sleep on her bed. And my great uncle Dean he's so funny every time I come over he always wants to check my vital signs which is cool with me since then I know I am at least alive and well (I wonder if all EMTs are like that). But the weirdest relative I have met yet is my great Uncle Fran. He was over for dinner after the La Vigna Picnic and he was full of family information; my father seemed interested but all I wanted was more food. I hope the next time I see him I can pull on that beard he has--that looks like it might be fun. Well till next time I hope you all have a great Halloween and Thanksgiving. Love to all from my mom and dad.

## Just a Reminder...

Articles for the Christmas issue must be in by December 1st. So we can get the paper out before Christmas. But for now read on and hear how Corrine is doing and read about the famous Secret society and much more in this great edition of La Vigna.





## ZIP-A-DEE-DOO-DAH Dose it Again

On May 10, my girlfriend (I have known her since gradeschool)) Marion had her 50th birthday.

When I visited her she showed me the pictures of that special day, while declaring how delighted she had been over the singing telegram she had received.

Low and behold I see the picture of my cousin Angelo (Chianese) and Marion together. She tells me of the many times she has enjoyed the singing telegrams which she has witnessed when Angelo would come and present one of her fellow workers with a telegram surprise.

When you see two people you so dearly care for and find that they know each other, it is a joyful surprise.

Marion enjoyed the personal touch of this song which was sung to the tune of ON THE WAY TO CAPE MAY.

HAPPY BIRTHDAY!

On the way to Cape May, if you went there today,

Everybody would say: You're lookin' fine, what's your age? 49? Marion, no way!

You seem younger by far, Marion than you are.

You're a bright shiny star, yes you really are.

May the 10th, 1943, half a century ago,

You were the first of the nine; you really turned out fine.

So here's to ballroom dancing, geneology, to Elizabeth the Cat and everybody you see. They all arrived now and here to give a big birthday cheer, to you, for your 50th birthday.



## What's In A NAME?

The name of the cat is a matter still open to discussion, since Terry and Bea's other brother and sister insist that Cootie answered to the same title as that then-popular game in which weird-looking little creatures were put together. Bea maintains that she would never burden an animal with the same name as an offensive pest such as the cootie. For her Cootie was and will always remain Coonie.

Some members of the family would argue that Cootie did indeed merit the name. A large, independent tom-cat, in all senses of that term, he roamed the open areas around 90 Eggerts Road at will. He remained gone for days and, at times, for weeks on end.

Cootie's return home seemed always to take place in the middle of the night, when he would announce his presence outside Bea's window with howls and unmistakable mewing. Bea would joyfully admit the arrant animal and treat him to a bowl of milk. Often she would have to minister to his wounds and sores, the badges and scars of his far-flung adventuring.

I remember the early visits of Jack Anthony to our home. At that time he was courting Aunt Lorraine. As young men do, he attempted to show his kindness and gentleness by the way he treated the family pets. Cootie would have none of it. Without exception he greeted Jack with contempt and disdain, even clawing viciously the proffered hand of comfort. I can imagine the unspoken words in the mind of that seasoned war hero!

Cootie was a world-class hunter. Mice were helpless before him; he rid the house of their presence. As he aged, Cootie slowed down. He learned to catch rabbits-a curse to a hunting cat. The large dinners that rabbits provided turned him into an obese, lazy creature. and then he disappeared.

Today large, black cats remind me of that sleek tom creeping through the undergrowth, about to pounce on an unsuspecting prey. And his young mistress exclaiming, "Look at Coonie-Boonie. Isn't he a beautiful cat?"

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### A Note from the La Vigna layout staff!

Well here is the first La Vigna that was layed out completely on a computer. This is the reason behind the lateness of this issue,due to learning how to use new equipment. We would like to thank Lew Bilancio, Fran Bilancio, Terry Bilancio, Robert Immordino, Bea Johnson,Erma Linda Candelori, Lucy Gervasio and William Bilancio. And a special thank you to Linda de Vore for the use of her new computer equipment.



### "SECRET SOCIETIES"

It was September 1937 at Trenton State Teachers' College, and the fraternities were having one party after another. High up on the water tower Greek letters had been scrawled with spray paint, much to the dismay of the administration, and the pledges were up to their usual absurdities. It was on such a day that there appeared in my mailbox a note: The Gamma Zeta Chapter of Kappa Delta Pi invites Lewis A. Bilancio to become a member of its organization. I was astounded. Fraternity material I was not - two beers put me to sleep. But then in the mail room I noticed several young ladies who had the same invitation and were congratulating each other. Sure enough, my invitation was signed; Miss Marguerite List. I was being invited to join a sorority!

If the word got out, I would become the laughing-stock of Trenton State. So the letter quickly disappeared into my briefcase. But one of the young ladies had noticed and exclaimed, "You have been invited to join the Honor Society!" My ego expanded considerably and I steeled myself for the universal acclaim.

The honor came just in time too, as my cousin Louis G. Bilancio had just collected four gold medals at Seton Hall and my father, who was feuding with Lou's father, Uncle Joe, was not too happy with this one-sided distribution of medals. I quickly brought the good news to Pop. His response was quick and to the point: "Let me see the medal!"

I tried to explain the honor of being invited to join the Society (how the hell do you translate Kappa Delta Pi into Italian?), and then as gently as possible I broached the subject of the Society dues: five dollars.

"I've never paid for honors," he declared, "and I'm not starting now." Discussion terminated.

A few days later I visited Uncle Angelo in his bakery on Bayard Street. He was busy shoveling bread out of the oven, so I approached from the side to avoid the sharp point of the shovel handle. Pop was feuding with him too, so Angelo was very understanding of my problem. As soon as he heard, "five dollars" he put his hand in his pocket and handed me the money without a word.

The next weekend Louis came down from St. Bernard Seminary in Rochester, N.Y., to visit, and I quickly gave him the good news. Lou replied, "This is secret organization and it is immoral to join it." It was not his first intellectual bombshell, but it caught me unprepared. I was expecting congratulations.

"Lou, this is not a fraternity. It doesn't belong to the interfraternity council. It is an HONOR society."

But Lou continued, "If you pledge to obey rules and regulations without knowing what they are, you are giving away your free-will. You are abdicating individual responsibility. Let's see the by-laws," he challenged.

No problem. The next day I went to the pamphlet collection in the library to pick up the constitution and by-laws of the premier educational honor society of the U.S.A. No luck. No sympathy from the librarians.

I went looking for Marguerite List. It wasn't easy. She

was a busy person. "May I please have a look at the by-laws?" I asked.

She was taken aback. "Why do you want it?" I wasn't about to call Kappa Delta a group of immoral people, so I replied feebly, "just curiosity."

"You will get it at initiation," she replied.

This I found a bit frustrating, but I was not ready to concede the argument to Louis. Instead I went to visit the faculty adviser for Kappa Delta Pi, Ms. Jarrold. She listened politely to my dilemma, then said, "Lewis, I'm glad you brought up this problem with me. It has bothered me too." She searched in a file and handed me the constitution and by-laws. "Please return them as soon as possible."



Lou and I read the by-laws together and found them to be innocuous nonsense. When I returned them to Ms. Jarrold, she said, "Let's not make a fuss over this. Many would not understand." Henceforth I felt a special secret understanding with her.

Lou, however, did not let up. "Is it morally correct to join an organization that keeps its aims secret, even if harmless?"

But by this time I was fed up. "Jesuitical casuistry," I replied (A dig at a Jesuit philosophy teacher whom Lou adored). "If the aims are benign, what difference does it make?"

Lou's answer: "Many mortal sins start with a small innocent step in the wrong direction. Secrecy in this case is wrong. The Christians in the catacombs were faced with precisely that question. Their aims were even more benign than your society. Many declared their beliefs, and went happily to the lions."

"I'd rather be fed to the lions than face the contempt of Kappa Delta Pi," was my reply. Then we laughed at the absurdity of it all, Lou congratulated me, and we adjourned to the spaghetti and meat balls.

**By Lewis A. Bilancio**

P.S. This is the tenth anniversary of Louis G. Bilancio's death.



## THE CHICKS

It was the spring of 1921 and the coal bin in our cellar was empty. Pop would fill it with coal again at the end of summer. Mom took advantage of the enclosed coal bin to raise some chicks. She purchased a hen and half a dozen chicks. My sisters, Rose and Jenny, and I adopted two chicks each, and we would pet them and feed them regularly. I had just turned six and was on Easter vacation from first grade. Rose, in kindergarten, had two obedient chicks that would climb into the palms of her hands. Jenny, only four years old, tried to quiet the chirping chicks by assuring them that the sky was not falling down. My two chicks didn't like to be picked up, but they were smart. I would put their food on the floor close to my hand so they had to choose between starving or being picked up. They always made the right choice.

My mother, who rarely left home without my father, needed something for dinner so she interrupted our playing to take us to the grocery store. I objected because I had learned at school that vacations were for playing and having fun. Mom, who had tremendous respect for education, especially since she had never had any herself, paid no heed. She had to prepare supper.

When we returned, there was a letter in Italian on the kitchen table. We couldn't read it but it was from Uncle Alfonso, Pop's youngest brother. While we were away, as a surprise gift, Uncle Al ordered coal to be delivered. The narrow outside cellar window over the coal bin was never locked. So nine tons of coal were poured into the bin.

On our return all we could see was coal. The chickens had been buried. Mom and we kids were devastated. Mom was reminded painfully of the ashes from Vesuvius that occasionally rained upon her village. We young ones thought of our cuddly pets struggling and chirping for us to save them while the coal fell upon them.

We mourned for a half hour or so. Then I thought of a real good place to hide and we went back to our hide and seek. As time approached for Pop to come home from the railroad where he worked, we were reminded of the chicks. The grieving was contagious and when Pop arrived at the gate, we were engulfed in waves of sorrow.

Jenny was the first to greet him at the gate. Unburdened by logic, and knowing that she would have Pop to herself for only a second, she said, "Uncle Al killed my chicks."

I, who had not wanted to leave home in the first place, knew the cause. "The chicks got killed because we were not home to save them." Poor Rose was hiding when Pop arrived and was abandoned there, so when she came out she started a new wave of crying.

Pop walked quickly into the house where Mom was singing the sad song which had just arrived from Italy, Santa Lucia Lontana. He was tired, and now sad, until he read the letter from Uncle Al where he gave us a winter's supply of coal in return for the many Sunday dinners Mom had cooked for him. Then there was a complete rejuvenation of spirit.

He could not understand our tears and my mother's distress. When Uncle Al visited on Sunday, we were sternly instructed to show our appreciation. But when we saw him, we could only think of our lost chicks.

By Lewis Bilancio



This photo was taken by Arty Bilancio at a family picnic, cir. 1980 of Alfonso Bilancio (who killed my chicks) on the left and his older brother Uncle Joe on the right. Uncle Joe was the father of Louis J. Bilancio, Mary Armenti, Ralph, and Lucy Gervasio.



# News From a Distant Land

Dear LaVigna,

I would first like to say how beautiful the La Vigna dedicated to Uncle Pat was. It gave me a sense of him as a man and of all the love he surrounded himself with in his family.

The picnic was wonderful as always. Many thanks to Clara and Dean for sharing this setting with us that is so rich in fond memories.

The English classes that I teach to Danish business people are up and running. On Mondays I teach at an engineering firm and at the state general accounting office. Tuesday brings me to private lessons with an attorney, then back to the state accounting office, Wednesday to private lessons with a bank executive secretary and then to a class at the Danish export credit council, and so on. English is in strong demand. Fortunately I happen to have the international language of Europe as my mother tongue - it's a good thing I didn't move here from China (besides, airfare and telephone calls would cost more, plus my awkwardness with chopsticks...)

Peter is now working at the Danish Association of County Councils where he writes articles, speeches and deals with press relations.

Autumn comes early here - children go back to school in early August, the weather is cool and some of the more tired trees are already changing their colors in preparation for bedding down for winter. We send our best to all of you.

Corinne Bilancio and Peter Schoning

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Denmark

Telephone number: (Country code 45) 35 36 19 61

(Note: Corinne will be in Glassboro Oct 29 - Nov. 13)

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## GARDENING AT 42°13' NORTH LATITUDE GARDEN MUSINGS

6:45 AM, September 24, 1993. Frost. Not a killer frost, but it's frost. It's been my best garden since I worked with my Grandpop Giuseppe from 1979-1983.

I've got buttercup squash, acorn squash, butternut squash, zucchini squash, pumpkin squash and more squashes I don't even know the names of than I know what to do with. Name or no name they'll look good around the old farm house until I put them in the oven or share them with the neighbors.

Beans, too. I first planted these in mid-May. No luck. I planted again in early June. Success.

Black beans, bush beans, pinto beans. Good for picking last week in July. Here it is the end of September and all are still prolific.

The pinto and black beans have gotten somewhat tough, but the Blue Lake bush beans are huge and tender.

Mustard greens, Swiss chard, carrots, escarole and beets are mature and ready for harvest. These I planted on May 15.

Corn was a disaster. Stunted plants, poorly developed ears, worms, raccoons, diseases, deer.

I planted my parsley in the loam from my leaf dumping ground. It's sensational, the dark curly leaves pushing through the malva.

My 72 tomato plants, all staked and tied, have been generous. It was late August before they really began to produce.

The basil, planted June 15, is full. It was at its peak when this cold moved in taking its sheen away.

Zinnias, sunflowers. Purple morning glory, Calendula.

Herbs. Thyme, sage, tarragon, oregano, chives, and pennyroyal.

I maintain a scallion patch, which grows annually in the southeast corner. They're from my Grandpop's garden, via my Mom's garden at Eggerts Road in Trenton NJ (40°13' North latitude).

No garlic this year. I should have planted it this September for next. Maybe I'll get it in ~~in~~ October.

Hot peppers didn't make it. Bell peppers finally matured in September.

Here in Texas Corners, Michigan at 42°17' we're at approximately the same latitude as Boston, Massachusetts. Just 40 miles

continued on page 6



# OUR FAMILY PICNICS AT EGGERTS CROSSING

BY ERMA ARMENTI CANDELORI

This is my first article written for La Vigna. With the gentle-hearted prompting of my dear cousins, Bea and Clora, nourished by cousin Lew's sweet figs and supported by cousins Bob and Jenny, I sat myself down to the task of putting thoughts on paper.

Almost immediately my thoughts wander back in time to search for those wonderful memories of our family picnics at Uncle Lou and Aunt Rose's house at Eggerts-Crossing. Coming from the city it was like going on an adventure. Thor, the grand dog, appearing as we drove up the driveway. The creek, with its rope swinging over it carrying one of my cousins or brothers hanging on and shouting as though it were a Tarzan movie. The great hill beside the house where it would be determined who would be KING. The sack race, when we would hold on to our partner so tightly and perform as though we had practiced for weeks to win this event. Going with cousin Bea to see her collection of beautiful butterflies--it was a treat no matter how many times I viewed them. Chores--you never felt like an invited guest when you went to Aunt Rose's picnics. You--and everyone else there--made the picnic. Everyone had a chore to perform--a very important chore. Whether it be counting out the peanuts for the race or preparing the dazzling bomb fire for the evening's events. She made you feel so needed and important.

The arriving was full of excitement--the leaving was filled with family love and anticipation of the next time. And there were many "next times."

## Carolyn Takes the Computers Out of the Class Room

By Robert Immordino

Computer technology is becoming more accessible to students at Kent Center School in Kent, Connecticut thanks in part to the dedicated efforts of Computer teacher Carolyn MacLeod, daughter of Robert and Jennie Immordino.

Carolyn who was trained as an Elementary school teacher at Trenton State College, introduced and developed the teaching of computers in the Kent Center School. She received her M.A. in Computer Technology from Fairfield University in Connecticut.

In a recent interview by the local Kent, Connecticut newspaper Mrs. MacLeod is quoted as stating, "My plan is to move computers from the computer room into the classrooms while we build up the technology in the computer room. This will give more power to the teachers and students in their computer usage."

Carolyn, who hopes to see a computer Adult Education program introduced in the school system, said, "There are a lot of people in the community who would be interested in this type of program."



## GARDENING AT 42°13' NORTH LATITUDE

east of the Great Lakes. The soil is sandy, almost like a beach. Lots of vineyards. Plum, cherry, apple, peach orchards. Welch's has a major processing plant 15 miles west of here. At this time of year you can smell the grapes for miles and miles day and night. When I was growing up at Eggerts Road, the garden was like the axis around which the seasons and so much of life rotated. It was where father and sons, brothers and sisters, and mother and children "zapped", worked and dreamed together. Where stories were told. Where family legends lived. I think about this as I work and dream with my wife Angelica and our children Ira and Luigi in our garden.

The last frost this summer was June 18. Last year it was June 20th. I wish I had a fig tree to bury. Maybe next year.

## A Word from Leah

Hi Everybody!

It's Leah in California just letting all of you know what I'm up to. My pediatrician says I'm up to 2' 8" - Wow! - I'm tall like my Dada.

But really I'm having fun with family visiting me. My cousin Jonathan came to visit me in May--lots of laughs. Jonathan is lots of fun and we learned new things together. You can't tell from the picture but I have a big white smile with all my new teeth--16 all together!

Gervasio visit from hope the picnic was with Jonathan Uncle



I know it's been hot in New Jersey sooo stay cool for the summer. I'm very busy so I have to go now.

Then we had a picnic with a Aunt Lucy. I family reunion fun, especially Corinne and and Aunt Jane & James.



OCTOBER

1994

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
<i>a Chianese</i>	<i>Katherine Chianese</i>					
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
	<i>COLUMBUS DAY OBSVD.</i> <i>Ray Armenti</i>		<i>COLUMBUS DAY</i>			<i>Susan Picascia</i>
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
			<i>Jennie Bilancio</i> <i>Mickey Chianese</i>			
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30	31					
<i>nice Smailer</i>	<i>HALLOWEEN</i>		<i>Michael Gervasio</i>	<i>Angelica Roberts</i>		<i>Christy Gervasio</i> <i>Tim Montague</i>

THE PERFECT CHRISTMAS GIFT

Is a calendar. No, not an ordinary calendar but a calendar with your birthday on it together with the birthdays of 159 of your family friends. A *La Vigna 1994* tenth anniversary celebration calendar is now available. The calendar is 8½ x 11 inches closed and double that size when it is hanging against the wall. A condensed sample calendar month is above. On the back of each month in the calendar there is a recipe selected from those published in the *Vigna*. A sample is on page 8.

There are many surprising bits of information. One day has five birthdays, and the Bilancios and Chianeses are now a minority. How about names like Klepczynski, Johnson, MacLeod, Schutts, Cohen, Spillers, Slaninka, Weisner, Anthony, Montague, Josephson, Roberts, Cramer, Schning? They are your relatives!

For your copy, contact Lew Bilancio at 324 N. Delsea Drive, Glassboro, NJ 08028, (609) 881- 0911 or Jenny Immordino at 34 Lawn Park Avenue, Lawrenceville, NJ 08648, (609) 882-7138. Cost - \$6.00 or \$7.00 if mailed.

The calendar was compiled by Lew and Corinne Bilancio from information appearing in past issues of *La Vigna*. There were corrections by the editorial committee. Please notify us of additional birthdays and corrections. The computer work was donated by Glenn Cheng of the High Impact Technology Co. (HIT) in Glassboro, NJ. It was assembled and fastened by Peter Schning. This is a nonprofit endeavor; for each calendar sold, five dollars will be donated to *La Vigna*.

# LA CUCINA

## “STRACCIATELLE” OR EGG DROP SOUP

by Lucy Gervasio

I have many memories of my mother’s wonderful cooking, especially at holiday time.

Many a holiday meal begins with soup, and one of the most traditional soups with which to start off a heavy Christmas feast is what I remember as “Stracciatelle” soup. This is a soup made from chicken or turkey stock into which is dropped a mixture of eggs and grated cheese. I believe the name stracciatelle evolved because the beaten egg mixture looks like “torn rags” once it has been stirred and cooked into the hot broth.

### INGREDIENTS:

2 quarts rich chicken or turkey stock  
4 cups water  
2 small to medium carrots, peeled and thinly sliced  
2 teaspoons minced fresh parsley  
1 teaspoon salt  
1 cup pastina  
4 eggs  
2 teaspoons grated locatella cheese

In a soup pot, combine the first three ingredients and bring to a boil. Let simmer for 10 minutes with lid on pot so liquid does not evaporate. (If this happens add water.) Add the next three ingredients slowly so the soup continues to boil. Stir and let simmer for five minutes covered.

In a bowl, beat the eggs and add grated cheese. Stir the soup as you slowly drop in the egg mixture, stirring constantly. Serve with grated locatella or parmesan cheese. Add salt to taste, if needed, and serve.

Variations of this soup include the addition of small amounts (or more) of the following:

- julienne sliced and cooked escarole or spinach leaves
- tiny bits of chicken or turkey
- homemade strips of noodle dough instead of pastina
- tiny meatballs

**LA VIGNA**

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**Lawrenceville, NJ 08638**